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RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ADMINISTRATION

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Farmers to whom REA loans are bringing electric power for the first time are quick to form new electrical habits, according to a survey published in the July issue of the Rural Electrification News. The survey, covering 46 REA-financed projects on which the average time of service per customer was only 8.4 months, indicates that within a very short time farmers learn to use electricity for far more than lights.

First, in the average farm family, a house-current radio is installed, bringing entertainment and more news of the world as well as of crop conditions. Next, the farm wife banishes the sad-iron in favor of a lighter electric iron which stays hot. Third, the wash-tub gives way to the washing machine. Then the electric refrigerator comes in. Electric toasters, water pumps, vacuum cleaners, hot plates, small motors, and poultry lighting equipment follow, in the order named, to make farm life more pleasant and profitable.

New electric lines, the survey reveals, provide big new markets for industry. The average farmer, during the first few months he has electricity, spends about \$180 for appliances. This expenditure is in addition to the outlay for house wiring, which is anywhere from \$50 to \$300.

Small and inexpensive appliances sell rapidly on all projects throughout the country. Approximately 86 per cent of the new customers buy electric radios. An appreciable percentage of the customers also purchase more costly equipment; for example, 26 per cent, it is estimated, acquire electric refrigerators soon after obtaining electric service.

Striking regional variations in the saturation of all appliances, except the universally popular radio, are indicated by the survey. Electric washing machines are one of the most commonly purchased appliances in the North, the saturation figure never being less than 45 per cent and rising as high as 92 per cent on one project, while half of the Southern projects have a washing machine saturation of 5 per cent or less. The electric refrigerator, on the other hand, finds its best market on the Southern projects. Among the first 12 projects, ranked according to refrigeration, only two were Northern projects, one in Illinois, the other in Nebraska. Ohio projects have been the most liberal purchasers of vacuum cleaners. The electric range has found striking success in the TVA area, where two projects have a range saturation exceeding 24 per cent.

The Rural Electrification News points out that "large numbers of customers were connected after the buying season for refrigerators and ranges, so that the effect of their buying power is not fully registered by the survey. The number of new farm and rural electric customers has been mounting at the rate of 200,000 for each of the past two years, and with between five and six million farmers still without electric service, this number bids fair to increase at this rate for some time."

Other articles in the July Rural Electrification News include one by John M. Carmody, Administrator of REA, who describes his visits to several co-operative projects; one by Victoria Harris, who tells how she prepared a harvest dinner on an electric range before an audience of 1,500 in Minnesota; and an article depicting George Washington and Thomas Jefferson as American pioneers in scientific farming.

